

Frequently Asked Questions about NAEP 2009

1. Is participation in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) voluntary?

Every federal education law is conditioned on a state's decision to accept federal program funds. Despite the occasional use of the term "mandate" when discussing federal program obligations, there is no federal "mandate" to do anything in local schools. All obligations incurred by state and local education agencies are conditions placed on the receipt of federal funds. Any state that does not want to abide by these requirements need not accept the federal grant money.

The Legislation - No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), as federal education law, is in accordance with this "condition," which obliges states that accept Title I funding to participate in NAEP. The exact wording of the NCLB, the legislation reauthorizing ESEA, can be found in Public Law 107-110 Title I Part A, sec. 1111 and Public Law 107-110 Title VI, Part A.

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>

Title I Final Regulations - from the U.S. Department of Education

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: These regulations implement changes to Title I of the ESEA, as amended by the NCLB Act (Public Law 107-110), enacted January 8, 2002. On August 6, 2002, the Secretary published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for these programs in the Federal Register (67 FR 50986). In the preamble to the NPRM, the Secretary discussed on pages 50986 through 51001 the major revisions proposed in that document to implement changes in the provisions of Title I made by the NCLB Act.

These included the following: Clarifying in Sec. 200.11 that a condition of receiving Title I funds is that, if selected, the local educational agency (LEA) must participate in the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP).

(a) State participation. Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, each State that receives funds under subpart A of this part must participate in biennial State academic assessments of fourth and eighth grade reading and mathematics under the State National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), if the Department pays the costs of administering those assessments.

(b) Local participation. In accordance with section 1112(b)(1)(F) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and notwithstanding section 411(d)(1) of the National Education Statistics Act of 1994, an LEA that receives funds under subpart A of this part must participate, if selected, in the State-NAEP assessments referred to in paragraph (a) of this section.

Section 1112(b)(1)(F) of the ESEA requires that an LEA, in its plan submitted to the State, provide an assurance that it will participate, if selected, in NAEP. The statute is clear that all LEAs, if selected, must participate. The Secretary further believes that there will be few, if any, extenuating circumstances that would excuse a school from participating in the State-NAEP and will address any special circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

For the full text of the Title I final regulations, see
<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2002-4/120202a.html>.

2. What is the rationale behind attaching Title I funding to SEA and LEA participation in NAEP?

Stakeholders wanted public school students to have an opportunity to participate in the national dialogue around issues of accountability and student performance in educational assessment. So, a representative sample is drawn in each state that matches the state's demographics because administering the assessment to every student in the country would be very expensive.

To take the responsibility for deciding who would or would not participate off states, districts, and schools, Title I funding provides an incentive to insure that state and local agencies provide students with the opportunity to participate in NAEP if their school is selected as part of the representative sample.

At the same time, stakeholders and policy makers gave parents/guardians the responsibility for the student's participation in NAEP through federal legislation that requires state education agencies (SEA) and local education agencies (LEA) to notify parents that student participation is voluntary and that students are not required to complete each item on the assessment. Parents can learn more about NAEP by reading "The Nation's Report Card: Parents' Guide to NAEP" at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/naep/parentsguide.pdf>. A copy of this brochure is also sent to each school that is part of the NAEP sample so parents can better understand the importance of NAEP and student participation in NAEP.

3. Why doesn't NAEP provide student, school, and district results?

- Each student only takes a small part of the overall assessment (about 25%), so only when the scores are compiled across the state, region, or Nation are the data considered valid and reliable estimates of what students know and can do in the content area;
- Typically, only a small number of students in a school participate, and without scores for all students in the school, we cannot accurately provide a picture of how the population of a school as a whole performed;
- Similarly, since all of the schools in a district do not participate in a NAEP assessment, it would be impossible to report a score for a district; and
- Federal law requires that NAEP data remain confidential, so all personally identifiable information about students and individual schools is removed at the school on the day of the assessment before the test booklets and demographic information are sent to NAEP for scoring.

4. Which content areas are scheduled for NAEP in 2009?

In 2009, NAEP will be administering operational tests in reading, mathematics, and science at grades 4 and 8. A student will take only one of the three content areas and may be sampled to participate in a pilot/probe of hands-on science or computer technology. At each test site, the tests are "spiraled" throughout the classroom so that some students in the room take reading, some math, and some science.

Additionally, eight high schools in Maine will be a "sampling site" for pilot testing in U.S. History, Civics and Geography and/or a "pilot/probe site" for Hands-on Science or Computer Technology.

5. How are schools selected?

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) uses the Common Core of Data (CCD) to determine the demographic components of a state's schools and selects schools that provide a composite group that matches the demographics of the state. The state sample that is created by this process is called a stratified demographic sample.

6. Does NAEP test all grade levels?

No, only grades 4, 8, and 12.

7. How are students selected?

Grade level student lists are submitted to NCES by the state/district/schools and then student names are randomly selected by a computer program to represent other students in their state, their school, and their grade. At the same time, each student selected to participate is assigned a content area booklet.

8. How long does the assessment take?

Generally, the reading mathematics and science assessments take 90 minutes of the students' time on the day of the assessment. If students are participating in pilot/probe sessions, the time may increase to 120 minutes.

9. When is the testing window for 2008 NAEP?

The window for NAEP assessments in Maine is January 26, 2008 - February 27, 2009. Some testing at grade 12 could extend to March 6.

10. Do districts/schools have to administer the assessments?

No, NAEP sends trained teams to every school selected to participate, and the team is responsible for administering the assessment rather than the school staff. This practice frees up the assessment time for principals, teachers, and counselors, and it also insures that the testing protocols and standards are the same for every student in the country during the assessment.

11. How are NAEP results used?

Stakeholders and policy makers at the national, state, district, and school levels can use NAEP data to compare state-to-state, state-to-nation, and regional results. Reports for the most

recent assessments are available on the Maine DOE website under NAEP. Or you can visit the NAEP website at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/> for more information about NAEP.

In addition, the [NAEP Questions Tool](#) provides teachers with sample items for practicing timed writing in the classroom.

12. What are the benefits of state participation in NAEP?

Every state has different assessment systems for state testing, so the results of those tests are not comparable. The most important benefit we gain from participation in NAEP is the ability to compare Maine student performance with other states, and the nation because it gives us the only common denominator that is available to us for these comparisons. NAEP gives us a picture of what students across the country know and can do in various content areas, and it is the only tool our stakeholders have to make those comparisons.

13. Does NAEP offer accommodations for SD and ELL students?

Yes, NAEP endeavors to assess all students selected as a part of its sampling process, including students who are classified by their schools as students with disabilities (SD) and/or as English-language learners (ELL) or limited English proficient (LEP).

14. Who decides if a student is to be included, accommodated, or excluded from NAEP?

Only qualified school staff can decide whether the student can meaningfully be assessed or should be excluded from a NAEP assessment.

15. What is the purpose of the NAEP SD/ELL questionnaires?

NAEP School Coordinators will receive a questionnaire for each student designated as Student with Disabilities (SD) or English Language Learner (ELL). The questionnaires are important because they are designed to investigate the relationship between students' achievement and various school, teacher, and home factors that may influence this achievement and should be completed even if the student will be excluded.

16. Who completes a NAEP SD or ELL questionnaire?

For students with disabilities, the professional staff member who is most familiar with the student's IEP should complete the NAEP SD questionnaire. In the case of an English Language Learner, the professional staff member who is most familiar with the student's participation in Maine's statewide assessments should complete the NAEP ELL questionnaire.